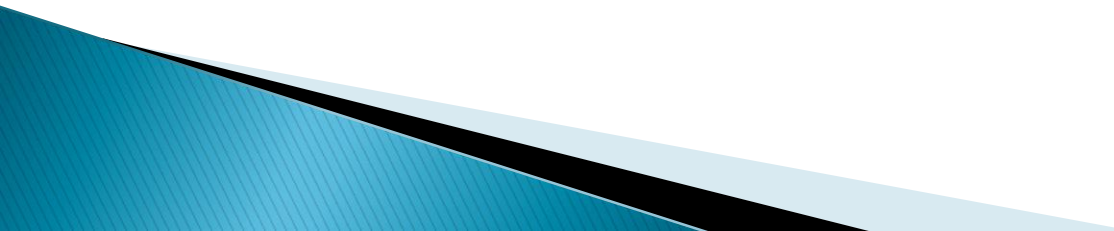


# The Printing Press

Central Historical Question:

How can historians argue Gutenberg's Printing Press “created a new and wonderful earth” while they admit it also created a “new hell”?

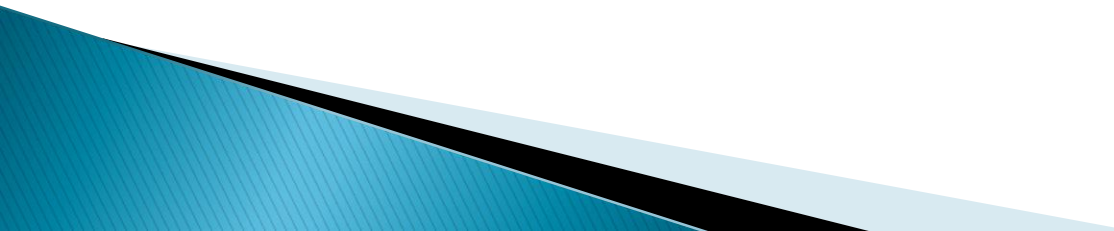
# Historical Context:

- ▶ Before the printing press books were written out by hand by Monks.
  - ▶ As a result books took a long time to produce and were both expensive and rare.
  - ▶ A short book could take months, a full Bible could take years to complete.
  - ▶ Because of these factors few people in Europe had books and could read.
- 





# Historical Context:

- ▶ In the mid 1400's Johannes Gutenberg "invented" the printing press.  
(The technology had existed in China for centuries by that time).
  - ▶ Because of this books became plentiful & cheap
  - ▶ Books were written in local languages such as German and English, not just Latin, which few people could read.
  - ▶ This caused a chain reaction. More books led to more people reading, reading translates to literacy, literacy leads to education and education leads to more independent thinking.
- 

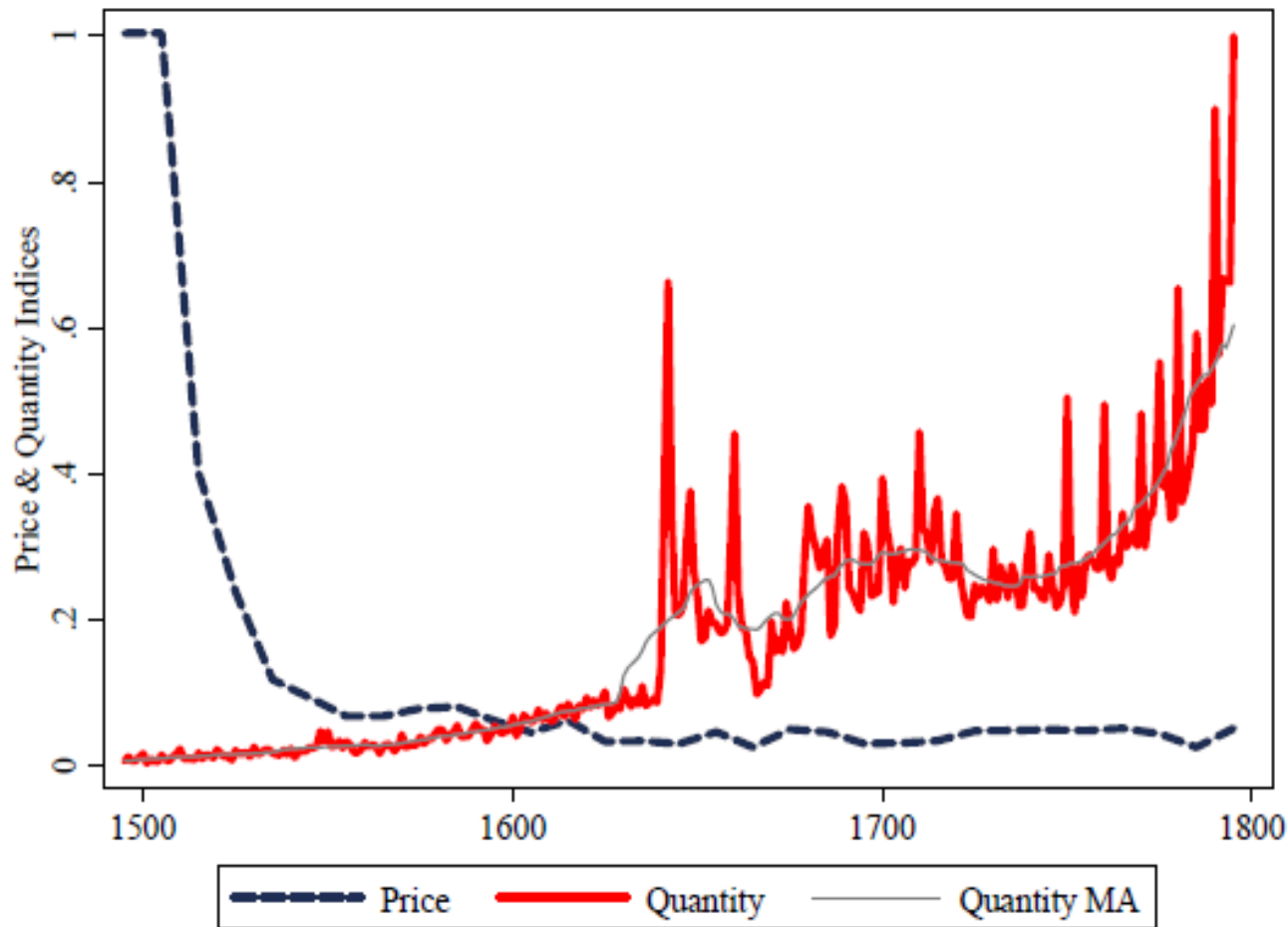


# Gutenberg's printing press.



A Wood Engraving of a printer's

Figure 3: Prices and Quantities of Printed Books 1495-1799

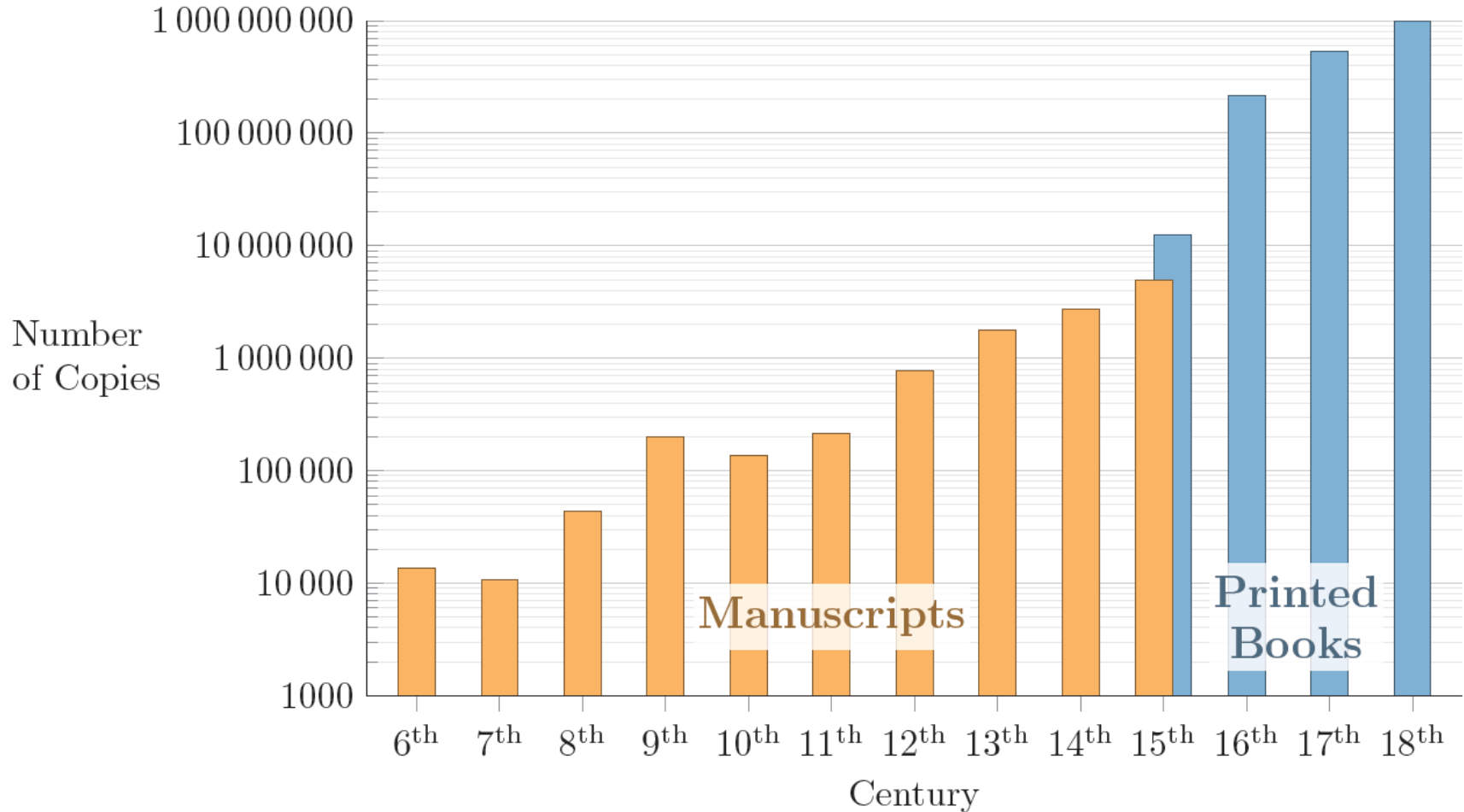


Note: Book editions are individual titles listed in the ESTC. The series is restricted to titles in England and adjusted for imports and exports following Buringh and van Zanden (2010). The price series is the normalized real price of 100 pages of text from Clark (2004).

The Number on the X axis is the in the old British monetary system. We will not worry about the actual conversion, but just use it as a percentage reference.

*The Welfare Impact of a New Good: The Printed Book.* Jeremiah Dittmar 2011

# European Output of Books 500–1800\*



\*without Southeast Europe (Byzantine, later Ottoman realm) and Russia

Source: Buringh, Eltjo; van Zanden, Jan Luiten: "Charting the 'Rise of the West': Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, A Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (2009), pp. 409–445, tables 1 & 2

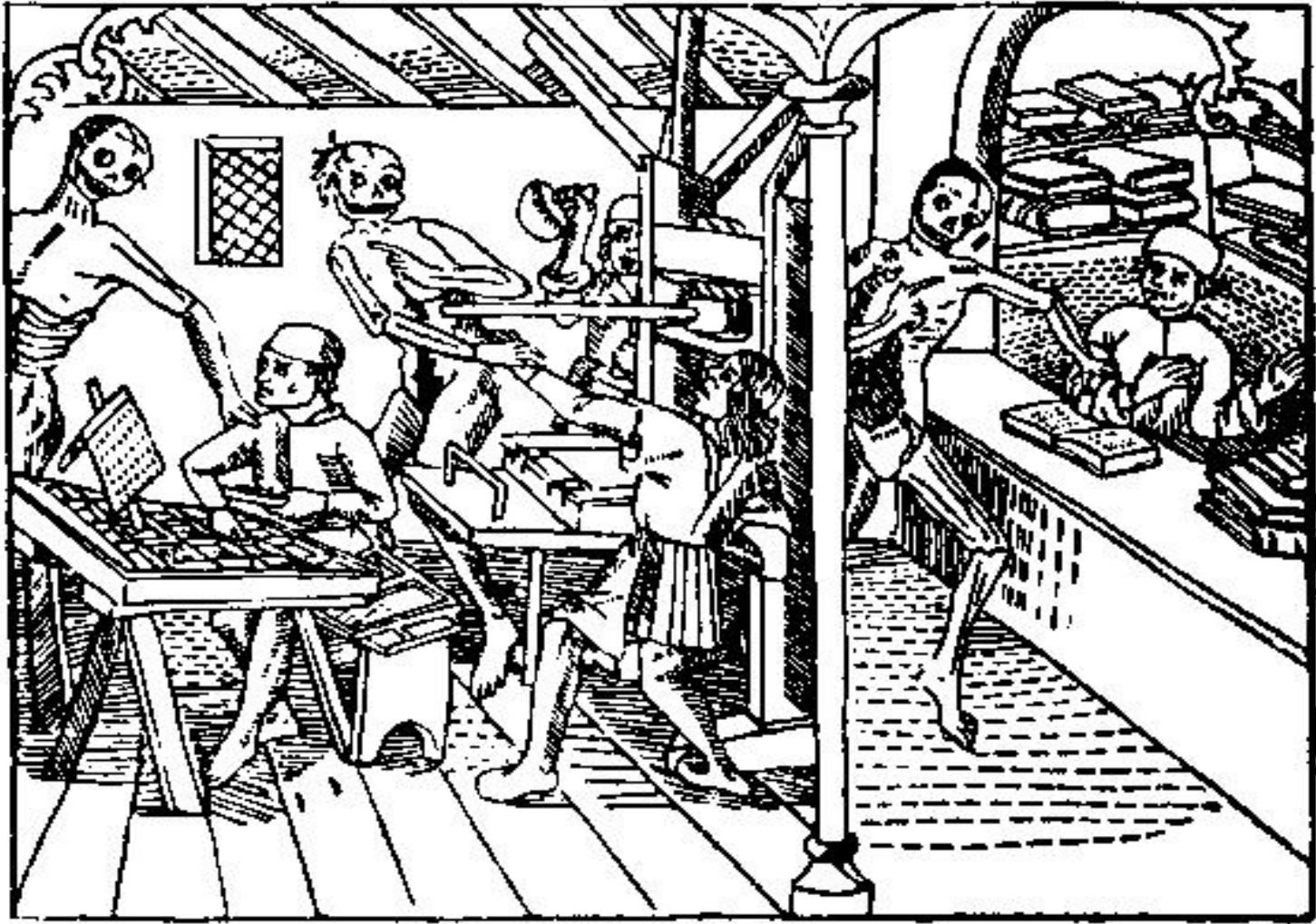
## Central Historical Question

How can historians argue Gutenberg's Printing Press “created a new and wonderful earth” while they admit it also created a “new hell”?

- ▶ Thoughts on possible negative consequences of increased printing, availability of books, increased literacy?



# What is the artist trying to say?



Typesetter, printer and bookseller, *La Grant Dance macabre*, Matthias Huss, Lyons, 1499

<http://www.godecookery.com/macabre/gallery3/macbr83.htm>

Thomas Carlyle. Sartor Resartus. The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh. London: 1898.



THE SCHOOLMASTER OF THE FUTURE



MOUNT PARNASSUS



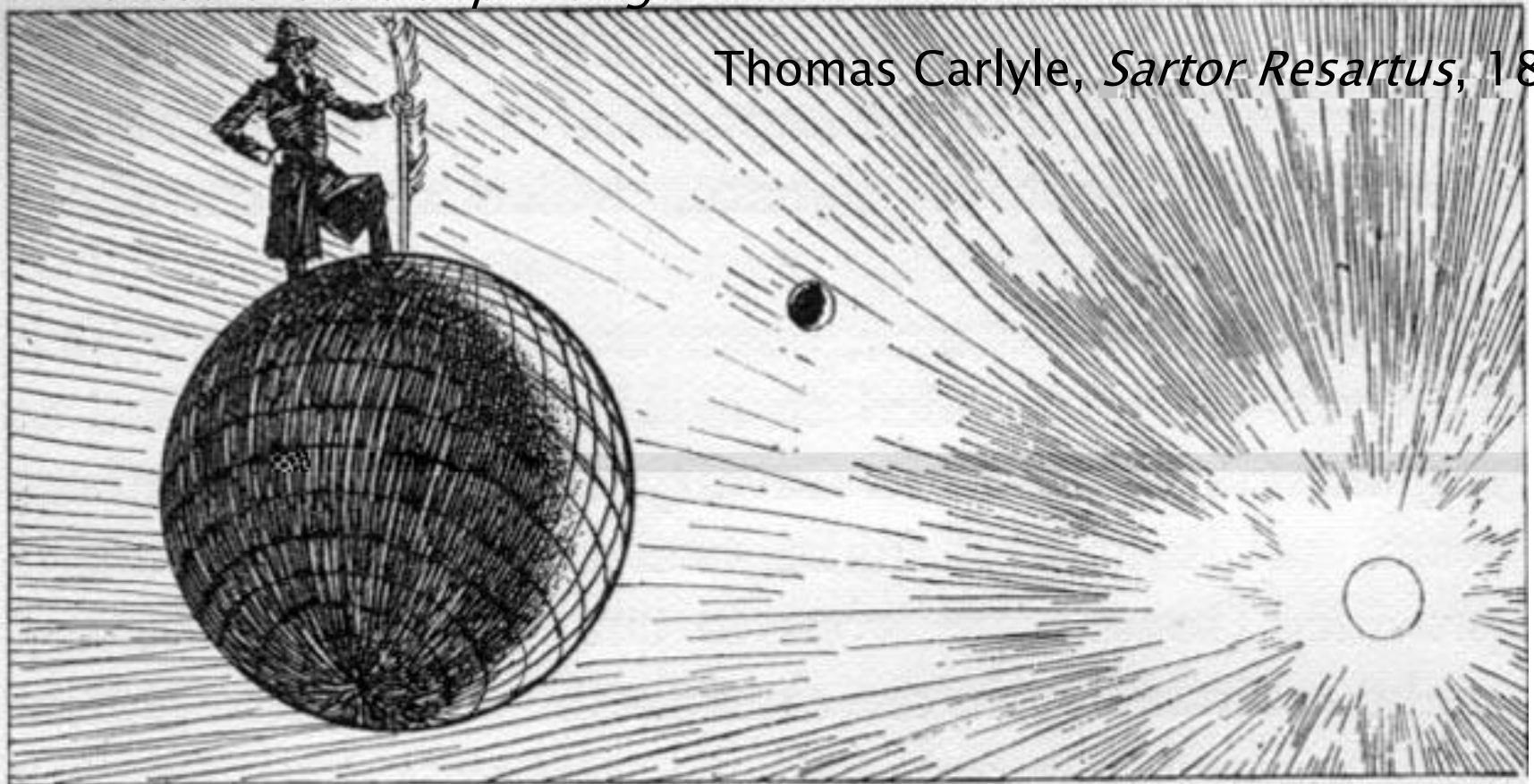
## Central Historical Question

How can historians argue Gutenberg's Printing Press “created a new and wonderful earth” while they admit it also created a “new hell”?

- ▶ Now what about possible advantages?

*He who first shortened the labor of copyists by device of movable types was disbanding hired armies, and cashiering most kings and senates, and creating a whole new democratic world: he had invented the art of printing.-*

Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 1833





So...a “new hell” or a “new and wonderful earth”?



WOODCUT OF A PRINTING PRESS AND A COMPOSING ROOM FROM LA GRANDE DANSE MACABRE, PRINTED AT LYONS AND DATED 1568

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"You and your literacy programs! —  
Now I'm getting lists of *demands!*"